

## BOOK REVIEWS

JEFF LOWENFELS and WAYNE LEWIS. 2006. **Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web**. (ISBN 0-88192-775-5, hbk.). Timber Press Inc, 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.timberpress.com, mail@timberpress.com, 503-227-2878, 1-800-327-5680, 503-227-3070 fax). \$24.95, 196 pp., 74 color photos, 1 color illustration, 17 diagrams, 6" × 9".

The new book entitled *Teaming with Microbes* by authors Lowenfels and Lewis is a fantastic resource. These authors have presented soil science and the soil food web in a completely understandable way. The interweaving of photographs, drawings and the easy reading style make this a very readable text for anyone with an interest. Gardeners especially will benefit from reading this book; they will come away with a comfortable (and applicable) understanding of the soil food web in relationship to their gardens and lawns.

The book is separated into two parts: basic science and applications. The first part of the book creates a terrific foundation for all the parts of the soil food web by using explanations of soil profiles, textures, pH, and providing readers with descriptions of various soil inhabitants from the bottom of the web up. There is a chapter dedicated to bacteria, fungi, algae, slime molds, protozoa, nematodes, arthropods, worms, gastropods, and reptiles, mammals and birds. Within each of these chapters on soil inhabitants' information, the authors provide what each are, how they act within the soil web, and how these organisms contribute to nutrient cycling. The authors focus a good bit of time and provide substantial information on both bacteria and fungi as is warranted based on the importance of these organisms in the soil food web.

The second part of the book focuses on helping the reader apply his/her newfound soil information to creating a healthy soil food web in their lawns and gardens. The authors demonstrate these applications via the use of nineteen separate rules, all of which are integrated into the remaining eleven chapters. For instance, rule number two states that "Most vegetables, annuals and grasses prefer their nitrogen in nitrate form and do best in bacterially dominated soils." Rule three relates to trees, shrubs and perennials preferring fungal dominated soil and nitrogen in a form other than nitrate. These rules are interspersed into the explanations of each application and are also presented in a succinct list form in the appendix. This application section of the book includes chapters on ...how soil food webs apply to gardening, tools for restoring soil food webs, use of compost, mulch and compost teas, maintenance of trees and other perennials, and growing annuals and lawns. There is also a brief chapter with seasonal activities to promote a healthy soil food web.

*Teaming With Microbes* is an outstanding book for those gardeners interested in a solid understanding of how to create a healthy lawn and garden. This book would also be a beneficial read for horticulturists, soil and turf science students, agronomists, or any other interested readers. Authors Lowenfels and Lewis have done a superb job of making soil science and soil food webs understandable; they even provide resource sections for readers whom have further interests in the subjects covered. Definitely a recommended read!!—Lee Luckeydoo, Herbarium, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.

DAVID TAYLOR (ed.). 2006. **Pride of Place: A Contemporary Anthology of Texas Nature Writing** (ISBN 13: 978-1-57441-208-6, pbk.). University of North Texas Press, P.O. Box 311336, Denton, TX, 76203-1336, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.unt.edu/untpress, 800-826-8911, 940-565-2142, 940-565-4590 fax). \$16.95, 214 pp., b/w photos, 6" × 9".

The larger-than-usual type size in *Pride of Place* seems apt for this collection of essays about larger-than-life Texas. David Taylor, a professor and Honors Advisor at the University of North Texas, has assembled a group of some of the best Texas writers to put pen to paper in this delightful contemporary anthology. Taylor hastens to say in the introduction that what binds Texans together is pride, not geography. And pride of place is what binds together these essays. After all, "It ain't braggin' if it's true."

Beginning with Roy Bedichek's "Still Water," it includes Carol Cullar and Barbara "Barney" Nelson on the Rio Grande region of West Texas, John Graves's evocative "Kindred Spirits" on Central Texas, Joe Nick Patoski's celebration of Hill Country springs, Pete Gunter on the Piney Woods, David Taylor himself on North Texas, Gary Clark and Gerald Thurmond on the Coastal Plains, Ray Gonzles and Marian Haddad on El Paso, Stephen Harrigan and Wyman Meinzer on West Texas, and Naomi Shihab Nye on urban San Antonio.

If you're not from Texas, you'll "get it" after reading this book. If you are from Texas, reading this is like being a kid on the front porch of a summer evening, listening to the grownups spin their tales.

Texas truly is a "State of Mind," as the old song goes. This anthology reflects that, and *Pride of Place* will be a proud addition to the Texas section of this reviewer's bookshelf.—Penny McCook, Volunteer, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.